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KHPA: First steps to broad health reform is good news for Kansans

Health Reform bill now goes to Governor for signature

“During Cover the Uninsured Week, it is appropriate that the Kansas Legislature has passed, and now sending to the Governor for her signature, a bill that starts the health reform process in Kansas. Today is a good day for the health of Kansans,” said Marcia Nielsen, PhD, MPH, Executive Director of the Kansas Health Policy Authority.

Both chambers of the Legislature passed a bill that reforms the system with incremental steps aimed at increasing health insurance coverage and outlines a roadmap to developing health reform options *this year* with stakeholders across Kansas, for consideration by the 2008 legislature. House Substitute for SB 11 passed the House 120-0 and the Senate 38-0.

“All members of the Legislature came together in a bi-partisan effort to support health reform for Kansans. They heard their constituents’ pleas for accessible, affordable and quality health care. I am pleased to report that we have made the first critical steps to accomplishing such a challenge,” said Nielsen.

Nielsen continued, “Health reform in Kansas is a monumental undertaking, and we have a lot more work to do. Health reform will require thoughtful analysis, rigorous debate and political courage as we move into the next legislative session. I encourage Kansans to share their ideas with their legislators and the Authority as we develop reform plans over the summer and into the fall. We need their support and input.”

In November, the Authority and Health for All Kansans Steering Committee will present to the Governor and Legislature data-driven health reform options that accomplishes these goals. Between now and then, the Authority and Steering Committee will be working with four Advisory Councils, comprised of stakeholders, who will be providing input and recommendations to form a plan that impacts the health of Kansans.

The legislation passed today includes a plan to help 24,000 uninsured Kansas families. Phased-in over the next four years, this plan – called premium assistance -- will help low-income uninsured Kansas families to purchase private health insurance. It will ensure that parents and their children are part of the same health insurance plan, and help families have access to coordinated and consistent health care services through a “medical home.” Research suggests that better health outcomes are associated with primary and preventive care provided through a regular source of care.

“We are optimistic the Governor will sign this bill into law, and we can continue this mile-long race in health reform. The legislature and Governor are to be commended for their leadership on this critical issue,” said Nielsen.

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